N° 79. SATURDAY, *Auguſt* 5, 1786.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

SIR,

MY father was a country-clergyman, a man of worth and probity, and who had the reputation both of learning and abilities. Being his eldeſt child, and, as he, perhaps partially, thought, of no unpromiſing capacity, it was his pleaſure to inſtruct me in various branches of knowledge, to which he judged my underſtanding was equal, and to cultivate my taſte by an early acquaintance with the beſt authors in our own language. Prepoſterous acquiſitions, Mr. Lounger, for perſons in my ſtation of life!—He died about three years ago, leaving my mother and four children, with no other fund for their maintenance than that ſlender penſion which in this country is provided for the widows and children of the clergy. There were indeed about 150 ſermons of my father's compoſition, together with many other manuſcripts relating to church-hiſtory and antiquities; from all which my mother for ſome time had formed to herſelf many golden expectations: but

but on offering them for ſale to a bookſeller, he refuſed to give more than Five Pounds for the whole parcel, and ſhe rather choſe to retain them in her own hands.

To relieve her of part of the burden of her family, a gentleman, who was a diſtant relation of my father's, was kind enough to take charge of the education of one of my brothers; and as I was now ſeventeen, and, beſides the leſs uſeful acquiſitions I have mentioned, was moderately ſkilled in moſt of the ordinary accompliſhments of my ſex, it coſt ſome deliberation, whether I ſhould look out for the place of a lady's waiting-maid, or aſpire to the more honourable occupation of a mantua-maker. While my plan was yet undetermined, the ſame gentleman who had taken my brother under his protection, wrote to my mother, informing her, that an elderly lady of rank, with whom he had the honour of being acquainted, was in ſearch of a young perſon, to reſide with her rather as a companion than as a ſervant; and that he had no doubt, if that eſtabliſhment was agreeable to me, it would be in his power to procure it for me. He repreſented *my Lady Bidmore* (the lady in queſtion) as a mighty good ſort of woman; and though he owned ſhe had ſome particular whims, he doubted not that I could eaſily accommodate myſelf to them, as they did not proceed

proceed from any fault of temper, but a ſingularity of taſte, which a lady of great fortune might eaſily be excuſed for indulging herſelf in. In ſhort, Sir, my mother and I judged this opportunity not to be neglected; and within a few days, our good friend acquainting us that he had arranged every thing for my reception, I ſet off for town in the ſtage-coach, to wait on my Lady Bidmore in the capacity of her gentlewoman or humble friend.

It is proper, Sir, to inform you, that this lady owed her birth to a decayed tradeſman of this metropolis, and her education to a charity-ſchool. At the age of eighteen, ſhe had gone to reſide with a relation in London, where it was her good fortune to engage the affections of an eminent pawn-broker. With him ſhe lived thirty years; and being left a widow, with a fortune, as was ſaid, of L. 20,000, ſhe ſoon after received the addreſſes of Sir Humphry Bidmore, Knight, Alderman and grocer, then in the 70th year of his age. After a year and a half, Sir Humphry dying without children, her Ladyſhip loſt a very affectionate huſband, but gained an addition of L. 15,000 to her fortune. On her marriage with the Knight, ſhe had ſold the good-will of her ſhop and warehouſe; a tranſaction that, now ſhe was a ſecond time a widow, ſhe never ceaſed

ceafed to repine at; and fhe has often been heard to regret, that fince her dear Sir Humphry was to die, it was a thoufand pities he did not do it a twelvemonth fooner. As it was, however, to no purpofe to reflect on what could not be amended, and as her title of *Ladyfhip* was indeed an obftacle to her refuming a profeffion for which both genius and inclination had eminently qualified her, fhe made up her mind to her change of fituation, and determined to pafs the remainder of her days with eafe and dignity in her native country.

To this Lady's houfe I repaired immediately on my arrival in town. If it is not always right to fuffer ourfelves to be influenced by impreffions, it muft be allowed that we often find the features of a character pretty ftrongly delineated on its outfide. I was no fooner announced, than her Ladyfhip, who happened to be ftanding, feated herfelf with great gravity in her arm-chair; and beckoning me to approach, began to furvey me with one of thofe fearching looks which I fuppofe the famous *Juftice Fielding* (bating that he was blind) would have employed to fcan the countenance of a young thief. My face happening luckily to give no offence, her next attention was beftowed on my drefs; every article of which fhe not only examined with her eyes, but her fingers,

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feeling the ſtuff of my gown, and holding my apron between her and the light, to obſerve the quality of the gauze and the texture of the lace. "Is this ſuit your own, child; or have you "borrowed it for the occaſion?"—"My own, "Ma'am."—"So much the worſe. Why, this "is a lace at twelve ſhillings the yard: Was "there ever ſuch extravagance! But perhaps "you had it cheap at an old-cloaths ſhop. Tell "the truth, child; for I abominate liars." I began now to ſee a little into her character, and reſolved to take no offence. In fact ſhe had gueſſed the real hiſtory of the apron, which I had bought that morning in my way to her Ladyſhip's houſe; and I owned it was ſo, and that I had it at a third of the value. "Why, that's "right again, child. I like you the better for "that:—'Tis a good thing to be ſharp at a "bargain. Such pennyworths as I have had "in my day!—And now that I can't buſtle ſo "well as I once could, a body like you may "be uſeful.—Was you ever at a ſale,—a *roup-"ing* you call it in this country?" "No, Ma-"dam; I came to town only laſt night."— "Why then you ſhall go with me to a ſale to-"morrow. Let me ſee;—(taking out a little "memorandum-book.) Tueſday, *Lady Fan-"ſtick's*: Tea and table china.—Wedneſday, "*Mrs. Griſkin's*: Kitchen-furniture.—Thurſ-

"day,

"day, *Mr. Gimcrack*'s: Antiques, books, and "pictures: I don't underſtand them things.— "Friday, *Mrs. Thrifty*'s: Bed and table linen, "feather-beds and blankets, damaſk in the "web, eider-down quilts, chintz curtains and "chairſlips: Ay, there will be ſome rare bar-"gains: every thing of the beſt ſort, I war-"rant it. Poor Thrifty! ſhe went to the "devil through pure œconomy.—Saturday, "The elegant furniture of a gentleman juſt "going abroad: A mere bite of *Vamp* the "Auctioneer's—his own old trumpery."— Thus ſhe went on; and I found her Lady-ſhip had made a regular entry in her books, for ten ſucceſſive days, of every ſale there was to be in town. "Why ſure, Madam," ſaid I, "your Ladyſhip does not mean to attend all "the ſales you mentioned?"——"Yes, I do "mean it, and as many more every week, if I "can find them.—How elſe do you think I "could paſs my time? Tell me now what was "your favourite occupation.—How did you "ſpend your time in the country?"—"Time, "Madam, never lay heavy on my hands. I "aſſiſted my mother in the care of her family, "and at my leiſure hours amuſed myſelf with "reading and writing."——"Why, that's "right:—ſo you ſhall do here. You ſhall help "me in the family-matters; and for reading

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"and writing, you ſhall read all the newſpapers, "and write down the advertiſements of all the "ſales. But come," ſaid ſhe, "I muſt ſhew "you what is to be your houſehold-occupation."

Her Ladyſhip then conducted me through her houſe; and here I beheld a *muſeum* of a new and moſt extraordinary nature. Her Ladyſhip occupied a large old houſe, every room of which was ſo completely filled with furniture, that it was impoſſible to find one's way from one end to the other, without winding through a labyrinth of cheſts of drawers, commodes, cabinets, and boxes, which occupied the whole floors, walls, and even windows. Yet in this apparent confuſion there was much order and regularity; for each room had its diſtinct claſs of articles, to which it was excluſively appropriated. But the two apartments which her Ladyſhip conſidered as the moſt valuable of her muſeum, and which ſhe never ſuffered to be entered but in her own preſence, were her china-room and wardrobe. In the former were piles of plates and diſhes, and pyramids of cups and ſaucers, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. In one quarter was a rampart of tureens and ſoup-diſhes, in another an embattlement of punch-bowls, caudle-cups, and porringers. The dark blue of *Nankeen* was contraſted with the

 ancient

ancient red of *Japan*, the production of *Dresden* was opposed to the manufacture of *Seves*, and the mock Saxon of *Derby* to the mock Indian of *Staffordshire*. In the ornamental porcelaine, the eye was completely lost in a chaos of pagodas, wagging-headed mandareens and bonzes, red lions, golden dogs, and fiery dragons. In the other apartment, the wardrobe, was reposited every article of female apparel that had been in use during the last sixty years. To attempt an enumeration is utterly impossible; for in the two years I have been with her Ladyship, I have not yet learnt half the names of these wonderful accoutrements. As the most exact order was observed in arranging the different articles of dress, it might even have amused you, Mr. Lounger, as a philosopher, to have marked the various fluctuations of fashion in the habits of our whimsical sex, and the fantastical coverings in which we have chosen, at different periods, to disguise our natural shapes. Here, Sir, you might observe the gradual progress of the hoop, both in its increase and wane, the alternate elevation and depression of the stays, the stages of gradation from the stiff jacket and farthingale to the sack, and from the negligée to the polonaise; the regular succession of laced hoods, caps, mobs, French night-caps

and

and Robin Grays; the progreſs of bonnets from the Quaker to the Shepherdeſs and Kitty Fiſher, and thence to the Werter, the Lunardi, and Parachute.

Her Ladyſhip was now pleaſed to inform me of thoſe ſervices ſhe expected from me as her attendant and companion; and leſt I ſhould ſcruple at the ſeverity or menial nature of any of my taſks, ſhe took care to inform me, that I was to be but an aſſiſtant to herſelf in every one of them. They conſiſted in cleaning and ſweeping out the ſeveral apartments, airing the feather-beds and blankets, turning and ranging the ſuits of linen; pinching, plaiting, and folding the different articles in the wardrobe; waſhing, duſting, and blowing the china; rubbing and poliſhing, with bees-wax, the chairs, tables, and cabinet-work, and ſcouring the kitchen-furniture. In theſe two laſt departments, however, we were to have the additional aid of the cook and chambermaid.

Early next morning (her Ladyſhip always riſes at five o'clock) I entered upon office; and being furniſhed with an apron and ſtomacher of blue flannel, went to work upon the tables and chairs: and in this I acquitted myſelf ſo much to her Ladyſhip's ſatisfaction, that ſhe declared me a good clever girl; and added, that ſhe had ſeldom ſeen a better hand at the rubber

and hard-brush. At eight we had tea and buttered toast, her Ladyship mixing a table-spoonful of brandy in every cup, which she said was good against wind in the stomach; and after breakfast she walked out, leaning on my arm, to the before-mentioned auction of china at Lady Fan-stick's.

Here, Sir, I had an opportunity of observing the importance of her Ladyship's character, who no sooner made her appearance, than the auctioneer, laying down a lot which he was just going to knock off, called out for a chair to Lady Bidmore, and courteously making a sign to the company to give way, beckoned to her Ladyship to take her seat at his right hand. Then handing to her the lot, which he called a round tureen, he desired her Ladyship to observe the strength and solidity of the manufacture, and the beauty of the colouring. After a short examination, and ringing it, to try if it was without flaw, she returned it into the auctioneer's hands, declaring it a piece of true *Dragon*. Hereupon two or three additional bidders stepped into the field; and the lot, which was a few minutes before going at ten shillings, sold for twenty-five. Her Ladyship was now consulted on every article that was exposed, either by handing it down for her inspection, or by turning it to the side whence she

ſhe could have a proper view of it;" and her opinion was ſometimes given in a few deciſive words, and ſometimes expreſſed by a ſignificant nod or wink to the auctioneer. Theſe deciſions were generally indeed much more to his ſatiſfaction than that of the reſt of the company, many of whom curſed her Ladyſhip for enhancing their bargains; and one gentleman, with more plainneſs than politeneſs, ſwore he believed there was roguery in the buſineſs, and that the old pawn-broker was either ſelling her own goods, or had poundage on every article in the ſale. Theſe reflections her Ladyſhip (from being quite accuſtomed to them) heard with the utmoſt indifference; and ſhe bought herſelf many of the capital lots. She returned home in great ſpirits; and we ſpent the afternoon in diſpoſing to advantage her new purchaſes, which occaſioned ſome alteration of arrangement in the china-room, and gave us ſufficient occupation for the greateſt part of the evening. Such is the hiſtory of the firſt day I paſſed in her Ladyſhip's ſervice; and ſo uniform is the tenor of her life, that the hiſtory of one day is as good as that of a thouſand.

Hitherto, Sir, I have informed you of nothing in her Ladyſhip's character, or mode of living, to which a perſon in my dependent circumſtances might not have endeavoured, even

 cheerfully,

cheerfully, to accommodate herſelf. Nor am I ſure that what I have yet to inform you of will be ſufficient to juſtify me in the opinion of *all* your readers, for the reſolution I have taken of quitting her Ladyſhip's ſervice; at a time too when I ſtand ſo high in her favour, that ſhe has repeatedly declared ſhe could not live without me. Be that as it may, I owe it in juſtice to myſelf, to inform you of the cauſe of my diſſatisfaction with my preſent ſituation.

I had very early obſerved in her Ladyſhip's diſpoſition, that ſelfiſhneſs we often remark in low minds; a ſenſibility limited to their own pains and pleaſures, with a total unconcern for thoſe of others. It was however only by degrees I came to diſcover to what lengths this principle was capable of extending. I am now diſpoſed to believe there are perſons whoſe nature partakes not in the ſmalleſt degree of the humane or benevolent affections.

In the courſe of my attendance on her Ladyſhip at thoſe ſales which ſhe daily frequents, I have occaſionally witneſſed ſcenes which none but the moſt obdurate natures could have beheld with unconcern. An auction of the effects of a private perſon is frequently the moſt melancholy of ſpectacles. It is the ſignal of the diſſolution of a family, the breaking up of all the tendereſt ties of human nature: And it often

ten happens, that in those scenes poverty is superadded to calamity. I attended her Ladyship one day lately to a sale in the house of Mr. S——, who, about a month before, had lost a most amiable wife, the mother of five children. He had been unfortunate in business, and losing with this event all resolution to struggle with the world, he had determined to retire with his family to a distant part of the country. Amidst the confusion of the house, there was one room in which the children were kept, under the care of a maid-servant. Lady Bidmore, prying in the spirit of a harpy into every corner, entered this room, having in her hand a small dressing-box, which she had just bought. A beautiful boy, of four years of age, ran up to her, and endeavoured to seize the box: "That's my "Mamma's," said he; —"you shall not carry it "away; 'tis my own Mamma's."—"Mamma, "my dear," whispered the maid, "has no use "for it."—"Hold your peace, little Mr. Prat-"apace," cried my Lady Bidmore, "'tis my "box now, and I have paid pretty well for it. "Nurse, young master must have a whipping, "to teach him better manners."—

Her Ladyship has many poor relations, among the rest two sisters, who have numerous families. One of these is a widow, whom having once accommodated with the loan of ten pounds,

which ſhe was unable to repay, this circumſtance furniſhes, at preſent, an excuſe for allowing her and her family to ſtarve. The other having the misfortune to be married to a ſpendthrift and a drunkard, it would be an unworthy uſe of her Ladyſhip's money, to ſupply his extravagance and debaucheries. Thus, while in my Lady's repoſitories I have counted the complete furniſhings of twenty beds, her two ſiſters have ſcarce a blanket to cover them: and while there are, to my knowledge, in one ſingle cheſt, thirty pieces of uncut nankeen, there are ſix of her nephews at this moment running the ſtreets without breeches. Theſe, however, are her Ladyſhip's heirs, unleſs ſupplanted by ſome favourite like myſelf. For ſhe has repeatedly aſſured me, I ſhall find a proof of the ſtrength of her affection in her will.—Silly girl that I am, to forego thoſe brilliant expectations! Yet ſuch is the misfortune of ſome feelings, with which I believe I was born, and ſome principles, which have been ſtrengthened in me by an erroneous ſyſtem of education.

I am, SIR,

Your humble ſervant,

ALICE HEARTLY.